

5 - Training & Qualifications

Policy

It is Bureau of Land Management (BLM) policy that only qualified personnel will be assigned duties in wildland fire suppression or prescribed fire. It is also BLM policy to adopt the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standard, and work jointly with other federal, state, and local agencies, through NWCG, to establish minimum fire qualification standards acceptable to all agencies. Interagency standards allow for a cost-effective exchange of personnel and resources, and reduce duplication among the agencies. BLM also participates with other Department of the Interior (DOI) agencies through the Interior Fire Coordination Committee (IFCC).

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Introduction

Standards for DOI agencies, which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG, are coordinated through IFCC. Such additional standards will be approved by the Director, Office of Fire and Aviation, and implemented through the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS).

Certification & Record Keeping

BLM Manual 9215, *Fire Training and Qualifications*, identifies the training and experience requirements for BLM personnel to perform jobs associated with the fire management program. The manual section also establishes state and field office responsibility for maintaining fire qualification records and position certification.

Instruction Memorandum 95-2001 established the IQCS as the DOI's fire qualifications and certification record keeping system. The master file report provided by the IQCS meets the BLM requirement for maintaining fire qualification records. The system is designed to provide managers at the local, state, and national levels with detailed qualification, experience, and training information needed to certify employees in wildland and prescribed fire positions. The IQCS is a tool to assist managers in certification decisions; it does not replace the manager's responsibility to validate that employees meet all requirements for position performance based on standards.

A hardcopy file folder will be kept for each employee. The contents will include: training certificates for all agency required courses, Work Capacity Test (WCT) Record, evaluations from assignments, Position Task Book verification, yearly updated IQCS forms, and Individual Employee Master File Report from IQCS.

(*FWS, **USFS)

The Incident Qualifications and Certification Card (Red Card)

The Agency Administrator (or delegate) is responsible for annual certification of personnel serving in wildland and prescribed fire positions. Agency certification is issued annually in the form of an Incident Qualification Card (Red Card), which certifies that the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position. The Red Card must be reviewed for accuracy and signed by the Agency Administrator or by their delegated officials. The Agency Administrator, Fire Manager, and individual are responsible for monitoring medical status, fitness, training, and performance, and for taking appropriate action to ensure the employee meets all position performance requirements.

Issuing Red Cards to EFF-paid or temporary employees with qualification of firefighter 2, (FFT2) assigned to wildland and prescribed fire activities is at the discretion of the local unit. Proper documentation of training and successful completion of the appropriate Work Capacity Test must be accomplished. All Red Cards issued to BLM employees, with the exception of EFF-paid or temporary, will be printed using the DOI Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS).

Each State Director will designate an employee as the State Fire Qualifications Administrator, who ensures all incident experience, incident training, and Position Task Books for employees within the state are accurately recorded in the IQCS. All records must be updated annually or modified as changes occur.

Qualification System

BLM minimum qualification standards for wildland and prescribed fire are developed jointly with other federal and state agencies through the NWCG. These qualification standards are published in the NWCG *Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide*, PMS 310-1.

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training

Annual fireline safety refresher training is required for all personnel participating in fire suppression or prescribed fire activities who may be subject to assignments on the fireline. Any unescorted visitors must meet the requirements specified on page 4-12 of this volume.

This training must include the following core topics:

- **Avoiding Entrapments**
Use training and reference materials to study the risk management process (as identified in the Incident Response Pocket Guide) and rules of engagement (e.g., LCES, 10, 18, Look Up, Look Down, Look Around).
- **Current Issues -**
Review and discuss identified "hot topics" and "national emphasis topics". Review forecasts and assessments for the upcoming fire season and discuss implications for firefighter safety.
- **Fire Shelter -**
Review and discuss last resort survival. Conduct "hands-on" fire shelter inspections. Practice shelter deployments in applicable crew/module configurations.
- **Other Hazards and Safety Issues -**
Choose additional hazard and safety subjects which would include SAFENET, current safety alerts, site/unit specific safety issues and hazards.

These core topics must be sufficiently covered to ensure that personnel are aware of safety concerns and procedures and can demonstrate proficiency in fire shelter deployment. A minimum of four hours is required but training time may be extended in order to effectively complete this curriculum or to meet local training requirements.

Refresher training will have a 12-month currency.

A website titled, Annual Wildland Fire Safety Refresher Training, is available to assist in this training. It can be reached through the National Interagency Fire Center homepage "Safety" link at www.nifc.gov.

Non-NWCG Agencies

Personnel from other agencies who do not subscribe to the NWCG qualification standards may be used on BLM-managed fires. However, BLM fire managers must ensure these individuals are only assigned to duties commensurate with their abilities, agency qualifications, and equipment capabilities.

Qualification and Certification Committee

Each field office with fire management responsibilities will establish a Red Card qualification and certification committee. In areas cooperating with other federal, state, or local agencies, an interagency qualification and certification committee should include representatives from each unit. These qualification and certification committees provide management oversight and review of the wildland and prescribed fire positions under their jurisdiction. The committee also:

- Certifies that qualifications generated by IQCS or other agency systems for employees are valid by reviewing the training and experience of each employee.
- Determines if each employee possesses the personal characteristics necessary to perform the wildland and prescribed fire positions in a safe and efficient manner.
- Makes recommendations to the appropriate agency administrator or designee who is responsible for final signature.
- Develops interagency training requirements and sponsors courses that can be offered locally.
- Ensures training nominees meet minimum requirements for attending courses.

Physical Fitness

Agency Administrators are responsible for ensuring the overall physical fitness of firefighters. The agency administrator may authorize employees who are available and/or serving in wildland or prescribed fire positions that require a physical fitness rating of arduous, one hour each day for fitness conditioning. Furthermore, individuals who have a position with an arduous physical requirement may be periodically tested during the fire season to ensure they are retaining the required level of fitness and conditioning.

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Physical Training and Conditioning

Fitness conditioning periods may be identified and structured to include aerobic and muscular exercises. Team sports are not authorized for fitness conditioning. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *Fitness and Work Capacity*, 2nd ed. (1997), provide excellent guidance concerning training specifically for the pack test, aerobic fitness programs, and muscular fitness training.

Work Capacity Tests (WCTs)

The BLM has adopted the NWCG approved WCTs as the official method of assessing wildland firefighter fitness levels.

WCTs are administered annually to all employees who will be serving in wildland or prescribed fire positions that require a fitness level. The currency for the WCT is 12 months.

Anyone taking the WCT at *any* level must be in a pay status or have signed an Individual Volunteer Services Agreement form (BLM Form 1114-4). This will ensure that individuals taking the WCT administered by the BLM will be covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act, allowing coverage for work-related injury through the Department of Labor, Office of Worker's Compensation (OWCP).

Agency administrators (or delegates) are responsible for ensuring that the Health Screen Questionnaire (HSQ) is administered prior to initiating a physical training program and/or the WCT, and that accurate documentation on a WCT Record is retained until the next testing. Test results must also be entered in the IQCS annually to update the fitness level and date that will appear on the Red Card. Physical fitness dates entered in IQCS will reflect the date the employee passed the fitness test.

Note: Offices participating in the SW Area pilot program for the Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards are required to ensure medical clearance prior to administering the WCT (HSQ is not required).

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WCT Categories

The NWCG *Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide*, 310-1 identifies WCTs for agency-specific positions. There are three fitness levels – Arduous, Moderate, and Light—which require an individual to demonstrate their ability to perform the fitness requirements of the position. Duties in the “None” category are normally performed in a controlled environment, such as an incident base. For any position identified in the 310-1 with a fitness level of “None” or any technical specialist positions required to be on the fireline unescorted for non-suppression tasks, the required fitness level will be “Light.”

Work Capacity Test

Work Category	Test	Distance	Weight	Time
Arduous	Pack Test	3 miles	45 lb.	45 min.
Moderate	Field Test	2 miles	25 lb.	30 min.
Light	Walk Test	1 mile	none	16 min.

Arduous – Duties involve field work requiring physical performance with above average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending, and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of work typically is set by the emergency conditions.

Moderate – Duties involve field work requiring complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping, twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals usually set their own work pace.

Light – Duties mainly involve office type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities may include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle, and long hours of work, as well as some bending, stooping, or light lifting. Individuals can usually govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.

Test Administration

- 1) A job hazard analysis (JHA) shall be developed and approved for each field office prior to administering the Work Capacity Test. (See the sample JHA in Appendix C.)
- 2) A Health Screen Questionnaire will be administered prior to initiating a physical training program and/or the WCT with the following objectives:
 - To identify, prior to the work capacity testing, at-risk personnel;
 - To identify existing injuries or illness and minimize the probability of new injuries;
 - To establish the need for a medical examination (see Medical Examinations criterion below).
- 3) Administer the test using the JHA as a briefing guide.
- 4) Document using the Health Screen Questionnaire and Work Capacity Test Record (Appendices D & E). These documents must be retained until the next testing.

Health Screen Questionnaire (HSQ) The purpose is to identify individuals who may be at risk in taking the Work Capacity Test (WCT) and recommend an exercise program and/or medical examination prior to taking the WCT.

Employees are required to answer the Health Screen Questionnaire. The questions were designed, in consultation with occupational health physicians, to identify individuals who may be at risk when taking a WCT. The information on this Health Screen is considered confidential and must be kept in the employee medical file.

Solicitation of this information is authorized by Title 5 CFR Part 339—Medical Qualification Determinations, which provides for a determination of an individual's fitness-for-duty. The Health Screen Questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

Work Capacity Test Record Units will document the administration of the WCT to all employees and job applicants. This documentation must be retained until the next WCT is administered. Units may also be requested to provide data from these records to assist in the evaluation of the WCT process.

The information on the Work Capacity Test Record is considered confidential and must be kept in the employees' medical file. The identity of the individual must be protected.

Solicitation of this information is authorized by Title 5 U.S. Code Section 3301, which provides for a determination of an individual's fitness-for-duty. A copy of the Work Capacity Test Record is found in Appendix E.

Medical Examinations

Agency administrators and supervisors are responsible for the occupational health and safety of their employees performing wildland and prescribed fire activities, and may require employees to take a medical examination at any time.

Establishing medical qualification programs, as stated in 5 CFR 339, provides consistent medical standards in order to safeguard the health of employees whose work may subject them or others to significant health or safety risks due to occupational or environmental exposure or demands. The Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards is being piloted in the SW Area (DOI agencies only) in 2002. All other unaffected offices should follow the current standards as described below.

The following minimum requirements establish interim BLM policy and associated guidance until Department or inter-departmental policy is provided:

- 1) All employees who participate in wildland or prescribed fire activities requiring a fitness level must answer all the questions on the Health Screen Questionnaire prior to taking their Work Capacity Test. If any Yes answer is indicated, a Medical Examination is required prior to the employee taking the WCT (Forms SF-78, Certificate of Medical Examination, and 1400-108, Physical Requirements for Firefighter and Smokejumper Positions). A doctor will then make a determination as to whether or not the employee should participate in a WCT.
- 2) All permanent, career-seasonal, temporary, and student career experience program employees, who participate in wildland or prescribed fire activities requiring a fitness level of arduous must have a pre-employment medical examination to determine their suitability prior to their initial entry on duty. Thereafter,

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employees 40 years of age and older must have a physical every three years or as indicated by the Health Screen Questionnaire.

- 3) Temporary employees who participate in wildland or prescribed fire activities requiring a fitness level of arduous must have a pre-employment medical examination to determine their suitability prior to their initial entry on duty. Temporary rehires who participate in wildland or prescribed fire activities requiring a fitness level of arduous will receive a physical exam every three years.

Medical examinations are a diagnostic tool that can give an early warning to employees involved in wildland or prescribed fire activities about potential health problems. By providing specific guidance in this area, the BLM will not only provide for the well-being of valued employees, but also meet the BLM's need to determine an individual's capacity for arduous work.

Note: see Appendix F for Certificate of Pre-appointment Medical Examination for Firefighter, which may be used to supplement the SF-78 for arduous temporary and permanent positions.

Bureau Specific Positions

As a supplement to the qualifications system, the BLM has identified the additional positions of Prescribed Fire Burn Boss 3 (RXB3) see Chapter 6, Engine Operator (ENOP) see Chapter 8, and Chainsaw Operators and Fallers.

Chain Saw Operators and Fallers

The BLM has established the following minimum qualification and certification process for BLM Chainsaw Operators (Red Card certified as Faller A):

- Successful completion of S-212, including the field exercise, or those portions of S-212 that are appropriate for Faller A duties.
- Agency Administrator (or delegate) certification of qualifications after verification that training is successfully completed.
- Annual refresher training is required and specified by the local unit.
- Documentation must be maintained for individuals, including annual refresher training.

The BLM has established the following minimum qualification and certification process for BLM Fallers (Red Card certified as Faller B or C):

- Certification of employees will remain the responsibility of the Agency Administrator (or delegate) after successful completion of training has been verified.
- Training and certification of Fallers should be addressed case-by-case, and used only if a strong need is identified.
- Annual refresher training is required and specified by the local unit.
- Documentation must be maintained for individuals, including annual refresher training.

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (*FWS) Agency Specific Directions

Page 5-1 Certification and Record Keeping

Refer to Service Manual 232 FW6 Firefighter Training and Fire Management Handbook 1.5 Training, Qualifications and Certification for specific information on training & qualifications concerning: Certification & Record Keeping, The Incident Qualifications and Certification Card, Annual Refresher Training, Physical Fitness, Work Capacity Tests (WCTs), Medical Examinations, Prescribed Fire, Bureau Specific Positions, Chain Saw Operators and Fallers

U.S. Forest Service (USFS)**

Agency Specific Directions

Page 5.1 Policy

For the FS, standards which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG are identified in FSH 5109.17. Additionally, some Regions have additional standards and are approved by the Regional Director.

Page 5.1 Certification and Record Keeping

The FS process for certification and recording keeping is outlined in FSH 5109.17

Page 5-4 Physical Fitness Standards:

FS Direction is found in FSH 5109.23-3

Page 5-5 Work Capacity Tests (WCT)

The FS also uses the WCT as the official method of assessing wildland firefighter fitness levels. The specific direction, Implementation Guide, Health Screen Questionnaire and required processes can be found at the following web site: www.fs.fed.us/fire/fire_new/

Page 5-8 Chain Saw Operators and Fallers

FS direction can be found in FSH 5109.17 and FSH 6709.11, specifically in the 2000-1 supplement.